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OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHTRO
DE RUEHGO #0677 2750955
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 020955Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9518
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2302
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5763
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9367
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6952
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 2347
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2736
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000677

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: POLICE STEP UP SECURITY TO DETER POSSIBLE
MONK-LED DEMONSTRATIONS

REF: RANGOON 561

Classified By: Political Officer Marc Shaw for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Security Tight in Advance of Buddhist Holiday

11. (C) Police Armed Battalion contacts reported to A/RSO September 29 that police stepped up security around the Shwedagon Pagoda beginning September 27 in preparation for possible demonstrations on October 3, the Full Moon Day marking the end of Buddhist Lent. Toe Kyaw Hlaing, an 88 Generation Students activist who maintains contacts with prominent abbots throughout Burma, told us in late August that some monks were planning to protest beginning October 3 if the regime did not yield to calls to release political prisoners and/or apologize for actions against the monkhood since 2007 (Reftel). However, he said October 2 that an increased security presence near monasteries countrywide has hampered young monks' plans to demonstrate, and he now believes major protests are unlikely.

Commanders Order Abbots to Maintain Order

12. (C) Nay Pyi Taw reportedly has instructed regional commanders to maintain order in advance of October 3. In turn, authorities have apparently warned abbots at larger monasteries that monks will face arrest and imprisonment should they decide to protest en masse. Toe Kyaw Hlaing reported that Major General Tin Ngwe, regional commander of Central Command, which covers the Mandalay Division, ordered the abbots at two monasteries (with a combined total of over 4000 monks) to send all their young monks back home. The abbots refused on the grounds that travel during Lent contravenes the monk code. Major General Tin Ngwe reportedly continues to press them to comply. In contrast, Toe Kyaw Hlaing said the Rangoon regional commander ordered security forces to "contain" young monks inside monasteries. Some abbots are warning monks not to protest, even requiring them to collect alms each morning barefoot so they will not wander too far.

Earlier Planned Protests Fizzled

13. (C) Toe Kyaw Hlaing confirmed reports that monks in at least three areas of Rangoon attempted to arrange a protest on September 24 to commemorate the 2007 monk-led uprising but did not succeed because of the strong police presence around the monasteries. Another source told us a message being disseminated within the monk community warns them to be &very, very careful,8 noting that informants are seeking to infiltrate their ranks. A pre-planned demonstration October 3 appears unlikely, though we note tensions are high and something unforeseen could trigger an impromptu event.
DINGER